The Book of Hosea

Zanesville, OH | Sunday AM Bible Study

**Chapter 9**

* **9:1-6– Assyrian Captivity**
* **Verse 1**– All celebration and cause for joy ceases in Israel because of their blatant forsaking of the LORD. This forsaking is described in terms of chasing after harlots (idols, false gods etc.)
* The terms used in this verse for celebration and joy are those which bring to mind the yearly festivals God commanded the people to celebrate when they came out of Egypt (Ex. 23:14-16). These were times of much joy and celebration since God blessed the people with an abundance of crops and produce.
* In this verse there is a contrast to that. It is implied that the people are celebrating these feasts to their idols and false gods (*loved harlots’ earnings*). The same idea is mentioned in 2:5, 8-9, 12. He will turn their festivals and celebrations into a national mourning (Amos 8:10).
* The threshing floors, according to Stuart, were *“spacious, flat, open areas used not only for threshing wheat and barley, but also assembly areas for religious or civil ceremonies (e.x. 1 Kings 22:10), or more general harvest festivities (Ruth 3:2-14).”*
* Israel gave God up for the material and physical substances they thought came from statues, images of gold and silver, wooden objects and other false gods. Their concern was primarily based on what they could get and not how much they should give.
* **Verse 2**– Hosea continues the message of God’s judgment against Israel in terms of depriving them of the blessings He Himself bestowed. They would then learn that YHWH was in control of these things all along (Hos. 2:9).
* The major staples of their agricultural culture (grain, oil and wine) would be taken away resulting in total loss, famine, devastation and economic failure leading to their demise as a people and nation (Deut. 28:30, 38-40, 42, 49-51).
* **Verse 3**– Israel would be exiled and removed to a foreign land which they did not know and there eat unclean food. God’s sovereignty is here emphasized in His ability to bring the people to this land and to remove them from it (Lev. 18:25-28; 20:22; 25:23 Deut. 4:26; 28:63; Josh. 23:15; 1 Kings 9:7).
* Unlike their father Abraham, these people were not looking for the city whose builder and architect is God (Heb. 11:8-10). They were morally corrupt and physically obsessed that they forgot and forsook what mattered the most!
* For this reason, they will return to bondage (Egypt) in Assyria where the best they will get is the unclean food that pagans would give them along with the severe torture and punishment of being oppressed by the foreign kingdom.
* **Verse 4**– Israel will not be able to worship YHWH and observe the sacrifices and rituals associated with the Old Covenant as they could in the land of promise. God is removing Himself from a sinful and obstinate people (Hos. 3:4).
* There would be no temple/tabernacle anymore and no priesthood to conduct the ceremonial rituals. The food associated with these things were not available in Assyria. The *“bread”* they would have would be that which is eaten during mourning/death (Num. 19:11-14; Deut. 26:14).
* Israel’s eating of this bread emphasizes that they are indeed a *“dead”* people. They are cut off and separated from God because of their sin and the wickedness. Anyone who is alive in the flesh but separated from God is still dead.
* **Verse 5**– Hosea’s rhetorical question in this verse begs a rather obvious and sad answer. Like v. 4 where the Israelites won’t be able to worship an offer sacrifices, their days of feasting would come to an end in Assyria (Isa. 10:3).
* Thus, the appropriate response is that they cannot do anything. It is beyond their control and God has made the final call. The yearly feast, as mentioned previously, were not only dedications to the LORD but also a celebratory occasion for the nation. It is now a painful reminder of something that once was and will never be again (Hos. 2:11).
* **Verse 6**– This verse seems to suggest a possible effort by the people to escape the destruction to befall them. They could try but *“Egypt”* (symbol of bondage, captivity) will capture them and Memphis will bury them (Deut. 28:25; Amos. 4:3).
* Memphis was at one point a major capital in Egypt and it was known as a place where many people were buried (Isa. 19:13; Jer. 2:16; 44:1; 46:14). God is making a point by using Memphis. A place known for its ability to bury people will indeed make good on the Israelites people. They will not escape God’s judgment and they will be buried in death and destruction!
* When something is left desolate and material possessions are abandoned as in a national disaster, nature takes it course and weeds and thorns consume them. Israel’s treasured items will be left for nature to consume and they will be useless (Matt. 6:19-21).
* **9:7-9– A depraved people**
* **Verse 7**– Israel’s judgment is at hand and is partly already occurring or will take place very soon. The word used for punishment in this verse is the word *“pequddah”* (from root paqad) meaning visitation.
* The bible uses this word in two senses. To visit someone can mean to bless someone (Gen. 50:24; Psa. 106:4; Zeph. 2:7; Lk. 1:68, 78; 7:16). To visit someone can also mean to judge or inflict punishment on someone or a nation (Ex. 20:5; Lev. 18:25; Psa. 59:5; Isa. 10:3; 23:17; Jer. 51:18; Mic. 7:4).
* The second half of the verse may be God calling out the nation for its false prophets and so-called gods and diviners because of their sin (Jer. 6:14; 8:11; 28). It could also be that the people are criticizing the prophets God sent to bring the message to them (Neh. 9:26; Amos 7:10-17; Matt. 23:37). The former is probably the best meaning.
* Israel’s sin is described as gross (appalling) and they are described as a hostile people (Hos. 6:10). They are hostile to God and to their maker and the one who gives them all things (Exodus, Canaan Land, deliverance etc.)
* **Verse 8**– The idea of the nation depending on its own prophets (not from God) continues in this verse. The watchman/prophet is a popular imagery in prophetic literature (Isa. 56:10; 62:6; Jer. 6:17; 31:6; Ezek. 3:17; 33:7-20; Mic. 7:4).
* The point of this verse is an irony. Watchmen or the prophets were supposed to warn the people and rebuke the people concerning sin and judgment. Ephraim’s prophets/watchmen however don’t do that because there are snares everywhere and only hostility.
* Their prophets preached peace, safety and blessing but the exact opposite is what is befalling them. They are deluded and the fruits of their actions are obvious that it implies they are not of God and from God.
* **Verse 9**– The grossness and depravity of the people are paralleled to a past situation in the book of Judges (Judg. 19-20). When one reads the story of what took place there, how can we not sympathize with God and His purpose to wipe this wicked nation.
* Such sin is not easily forgotten and God who remembers even the least of sins, how much more will He remember these appalling deeds and bring down punishment that is just and befitting of the crimes they have done!
* **9:10-17– The fleeting glory of Israel**
* **Verse 10–** God speaks of Israel on a relatively high note in this verse. It’s not because of anything they have done but due to what He did. The idea of a traveler going along in the wilderness and stumbling upon a grapevine is stunning and out of the ordinary.
* The idea is that God’s relationship with Israel was an amazing thing and one which was rare in comparison with the other nations (Ex. 19:4-6; Deut. 32:10). They were His own special people as He led them out of Egypt to the wilderness in Sinai.
* Israel is further described in terms of a sweet and luscious fruit (grapes and figs) and they were the chosen ones of God (Jer. 2:2-3). As a traveler is thrilled to stumble upon such a discovery in the wilderness, so God was thrilled to care and look after this people.
* However, they worshipped other gods and devoted themselves to sin, evil and Satan. The Baal-Peor event is remembered often in scriptures as one of the lowest points in Israel’s history (Num. 25). They are no longer considered precious and sweet in the sight of God.
* **Verse 11–** Israel’s glory (once a great nation) will flee like a bird (going away quickly). The source of their glory was God and due to His separation, they are perishing quickly. The point of the second half of the verse is that all the things necessary for the people to increase and survive will be non-existent. The nation will not survive and recover from this (Deut. 28:18, 61-62).
* **Verse 12–** The youth of the nation will not grow up to see good days because of the evil and sin of the nation. They will all die or enter captivity (Deut. 28:32, 41-42; 32:25). When God departs, there is nothing good that remains and the people will reap the consequences of their actions (Deut. 31:17).
* **Verse 13**– Israel was planted by God (Psa. 80:8; Isa. 5:1-7) in a pleasant meadow just as Tyre. The comparison to Tyre here is one of glory and goodness. Tyre was once a powerful and wealthy nation (Ezek. 26-28). Israel was powerful and wealthy because of God.
* However, both Tyre (Isa. 28:1-4) and Israel did evil and thus they will experience punishment. The same idea of bereavement of the youth is touched upon in this verse. Instead of coming for a blessing the children will come out to die.
* **Verse 14**– Hosea asks that God give them what they are due: punishment. Miscarrying wombs and dry breasts would denote barrenness and the lack of fertility (judgment against Baal). This reverses God’s blessings (Gen. 49:25; Deut. 28:4, 11).
* **Verse 15**– God specifically calls out the sin at Gilgal (Josh. 4:19-5:12). This place was once associated with worship and thanksgiving to God but now it’s a major center for sin (Amos 4:4; 5:5). God hates their evil deeds and their sin (Lev. 26:30).
* God will drive them away to a foreign land (1 Kings 9:7-9; Jer. 3:8; Amos. 5:27). Their leaders as well as all the people were rebellious to God and His wrath will be revealed to them and He will love them no more.
* **Verse 16**– The roots of Israel are dried and they won’t bear any fruit because they are not abiding in the source to get the necessary nutrients (Jn. 15:1-6). They are no longer useful for anything and must be cut down and thrown in the fire (Lk. 13:6-7).
* The language of child bereavement and judgment upon the youth of the nation continues (Deut. 28:20-25). There is a direct correlation between bearing no fruit and having no children.
* **Verse 17**– The final verse of this chapter sums up Israel’s destiny because of her unfaithfulness to God. They have not listened to God (2 Kings 17:14-20; Psa. 81:11-13) despite being given numerous opportunities to repent. They will ultimately be forgotten and spread among the nations (Deut. 28:64-65; 32:26).